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**Amendments to the Claims**

1.(Currently amended) A device for protecting lifting inserts having a tubular body, engageable by lifting means, during embedding thereof in a prefabricated concrete component, comprising: an elastically deformable element insertable in a first axial end of the tubular body of a lifting insert arranged to be directed outside from the prefabricated component for engagement with the lifting means, said elastically deformable element being provided so as to accommodate in an axial portion of said tubular body starting from said first axial end; expansion means for acting on said elastically deformable element to cause an axial compression thereof and a radial expansion thereof making said elastically deformable element engage inside walls of said tubular body in order to prevent infiltration of concrete through said first axial end of said tubular body of the lifting insert, sealing means being further provide downstream of said elastically deformable element, connected spaced with respect to said deformable element and adapted to circumferentially abut against inner wall of said tubular body.

2.(Original) The device of claim 1, wherein said elastically deformable element is shaped so as to be coupled with play, prior to radial expansion thereof, to said axial portion of the tubular body of the lifting insert.

3. (Currently amended) The device of claim 2, comprising traction means, said expansion means comprising two axial abutments with at least one axial portion of (a) said elastically deformable element being interposed therebetween, said traction means being connected to a first one of said axial abutments and acting on a second one of said abutments, in order to move a first one of said abutments toward the second one, with consequent radial expansion of said at least one axial portion of a said elastically deformable element interposed between said abutments.

4. (Original) The device of claim 3, wherein a first one of said axial abutments is formed by a first plate, which is embedded in said elastically deformable element, proximate to a first axial end thereof arranged to be inserted first in the tubular body of the lifting insert.

5. (Original) The device of claim 4, wherein the second one of said axial abutments